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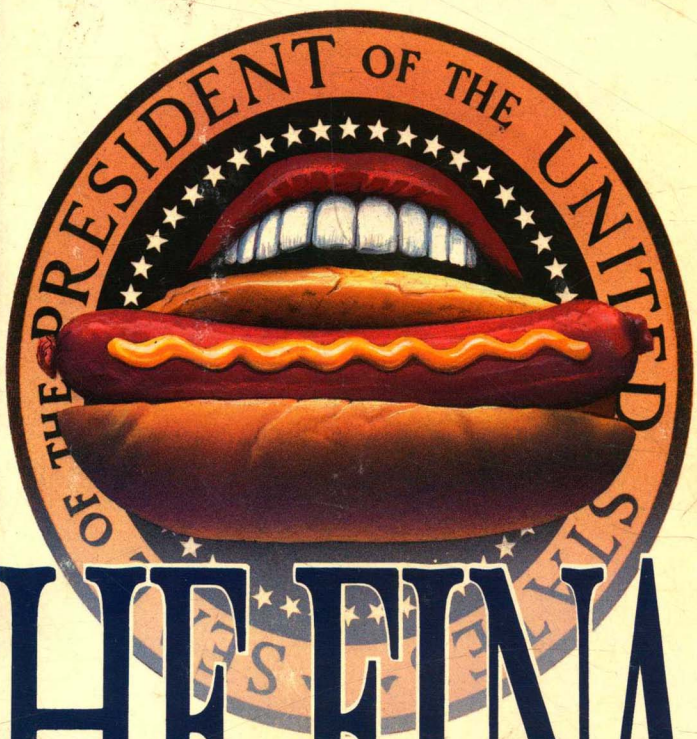
RICHARD CONDON

Author of THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE & PRIZZI'S HONOR



THE FINAL ADDICTION

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For Jemma, Nito, and Hilary (in order of appearance)

Squinting through the plugged keyhole of the past,
Spying on himself, (as it were),
Lo!
He saw that he had been wearing
Someone else's identity
All the time.

The Keeners' Manual

ONE

Chandler Hazman met his future wife in England when he was on his first overseas tour, at the beginning of his third year with the Central Intelligence Agency. He had been recruited into the service directly upon graduation from Eureka College, deepest and richest of mines for American intelligence agents, where he had sung (baritone) in the Glee Club and had been transportation manager of the Chess Team. Having been an orphan from four months, six days old, raised by a series of nannies and governesses who were supervised by a law firm which had handled his late parents' estates, little Chandler never developed an ability to relate to other people. He was a remote island of a man who lacked empathy but, on the other hand, also lacked quirks in his emotional character which might have been there had he become overattached to his mother or fearful of his father.

He would have been judged a handsome man by the standards of the American entertainment/advertising industry. He was lanky; a really good ballroom dancer; had an aura (really an odor) of baked cinnamon when physically excited. It could have been this fragrance which made him attractive to women. His son inherited the aura from him. This attraction surely was not based on the conversations of either father or son. Had either of them been a woman he would have been classified as a dumb

blonde, but Chandler Hazman was not dumb, he was only uninteresting except to people who were engrossed in chess and the excitement of chess tournaments.

Throughout his life he retained brisk, creative heterosexual interests. CIA psychiatrists rated him as a triple-A risk, classifying him as "passive/cooperative," always willing to be persuaded by women into the sex act but never taking the initiative himself. Undoubtedly helped along by his smell, he had run up quite a score this way, being particularly attractive to Tuareg and Tonkinese women. Under ordinary circumstances (if such may be said to exist) it would not have occurred to him to wish to know any woman after he had enjoyed her in a ritualistic way. He had been forged as a natural bachelor by his parents' early deaths in that he had never had a role model for marriage.

On the late afternoon of the day he met Molly Tompkins, they were both attending a pre-Christmas party in a country house near the Dorset-Wilshire frontier, she as a casual visitor, he as a tag-along with Norbert Gaxton of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries & Wildlife at the American embassy in London. The house was a half mile from a tiny village which had one pub, one church, and a post office–grocery. The house was well set back from a secondary road on a slight rise of ground which overlooked a railway line. It had many outbuildings, most of them containing horses. The hostess, a young woman named Deborah-something, had decided she wanted to live in a smaller house. Norbert Gaxton hoped to buy her installation as a safe house for the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries.

Gaxton left Chandler Hazman on his own while he murmured negotiations with the hostess off in the corner of the main room. There were about a dozen other guests, who spoke with one voice about horses.

Chandler Hazman had found a book about steeplechasing among several hundred other books about horses on the shelves of the study and had settled down with the book in a chair on a small outdoor terrace overlooking the garden. He wore a heavy overcoat, a tweed fedora, a muffler, and smoked a very expensive Havana cigar, feeling entirely safe from the gathering, which was neighing inside the house.

He had the permanent expression of a man to whom it had been explained that he must die someday and who was exercising all the patience at his command as he waited for the inevitable to happen. He smoked the long cigar with heavy deliberation, conveying sage potency as cigar smokers are intended to do.

When she materialized like a magician's assistant directly in front of

him in the feeble sunlight, he was startled. He took in cigar smoke the wrong way and began to cough heavily.

"Frightened by the horsey people?" she asked as if she were after important information, as if she were a psychiatrist seeking to lay the right question before him, the answer to which would reveal everything she needed to know about him. She had mid-Atlantic speech. He was repelled by her because she was wearing her hair in pigtails. He rightly believed that it was something an adult woman should never do, but her manner of dress revealed no other signs of the cisvestism by which grown women seek to appear as female children.

Hazman struggled to his feet, not appreciating the interruption of his study of steeplechasing, which although it had little interest to him, had provided a frame for his handling of the expensive cigar. Women, he thought morosely, did not understand cigars or their need to be smoked in repose. Women, on seeing a contented man smoking a cigar, were compelled to disturb him.

He remembered this first meeting so vividly that he was able to describe it to his son Owney again and again—how she had looked and what she had said—as though he were a movie projector. The time and place never became old in his mind. He always saw it as a pageant of romance, a tableau of stylized sentimentality, as if a greeting card were coming to pink-and-white life in his memory. Each time he told the story, his son would ask rapid questions about his mother.

Chandler Hazman would recall that his wife had had blue-black hair and a permanent expression of what appeared to be intense curiosity but which could have been naked ambition. It was her smile, not the woman who surrounded the smile, which had captured Hazman. The smile filled the void from which he had come. She had allowed the smile to exhilarate him forever, then it was gone. He attended her patiently, waiting for an exact duplication of that smile as he thought he had seen it, the way an astronomer will stare into the firmament for years awaiting the reappearance of a great nova.

"I'm an uninvited guest," he had explained. "I don't know anyone in there except Norbert Gaxton."

"The man with the beefy cheeks."

"The man with the basso voice."

"Someone said he was CIA."

"He's just some functionary at the embassy."

"Are you CIA?"

He grinned at her.

"You are only an uninvited guest in this house," she said. "I am in this country uninvited."

"Oh?"

"Hungarian. A refugee."

"I am Chandler Hazman."

"I'm Molly Tompkins. That isn't my Hungarian name, because it would be too dangerous to use my Hungarian name. I got my present name from an English music-hall song."

"I thought Hungarians never lost their accent."

"I went to school in Canada. My mother was a Canadian."

It was a pack of lies.

He could still taste her as he told Owney about her. He spoke very slowly, chewing each fragment. Afterwards Owney had ransacked music libraries by mail to London and in New York but he never found the song which his mother had said had given her her name.

Chandler Hazman and Miss Tompkins were married in February 1959 at the Chelsea Registry Office in London. Hazman was called back to Washington in June of that year to be planted as a mole inside the office of the Secretary of State. Molly moved into a little house in Meier's Corners, Staten Island, because, as she said enchantingly, no one would think to come to look for her there. Owney was born in March 1960.

In November 1960, Chandler Hazman was stationed in Laos as one of the Outfit's cadre assigned to heroin manufacture, which produced a vast income that allowed the Agency to increase its covert funds without having to bother Congress for them. He rose with the fortunes of the war in Vietnam to become an important government narcotics executive. He came home to his wife and son twice a year, but it was hard for him to get back inside the family of which he had never been a part, excepting for the weekly letter which he never failed to send. As the war continued, Hazman came home less frequently. He may have inherited the inclination from his own father who, after financial failure, hand-in-hand with his wife, had stepped off the ledge of the fourteenth floor of a Fifth Avenue hotel in New York.

Hazman had become an experienced manufacturer of No. 4 heroin, running eight processing plants in the Golden Triangle, with three CIA airlines to speed distribution. He had a dream that, when the war was over, and if he could find the right sort of backing, of setting up protected heroin factories in some forward-looking country and really make his fortune. He fantasized about how, if he could go home with a lot of

money, that he could reenter his family as a husband and father, making things the way they should have been. He felt that endless money might even have the effect of bringing his parents back to him to love him forever. In the course of his work in Asia he accumulated $673,000 in a Zurich bank account which he had established as a joint account in his wife's name, but his dreams were compromised by the mullahs of Iran.

His wife had provided her sponsors, the mullahs, with enough hard evidence to have had Hazman shot by an executioner sent out from Washington. To prevent that, he went to work for the mullahs as a double agent when his son was six years old.

He began to drink after this second enlistment. He was recalled to the States and underwent deep hypnosis in San Francisco under the care of two CIA psychiatrists, to whom he disclosed all details of his employment by Iran. So he was turned again, becoming a triple agent, which is more dangerous work than steeplejacking.

Chandler Hazman's Iranian case officer was his wife. The arrangement greatly unsettled Hazman because, although he had had no trouble in betraying either the CIA or the mullahs, he could not bring himself to betray his wife to the Americans, even though by then he had decided that his marriage had been meaningless.

At last, because he had served God and man at Eureka, because he had fought for his establishment in a world which was crammed full with establishments, he not only told his superiors at Langley about his wife's assignment to run him as an Iranian agent, but he told his wife he was going to tell them.

She disappeared on March 2nd, 1969, sixteen days before Owney's ninth birthday, taking with her the $693,000 in heroin profits and the family photo album with her. Chandler Hazman collapsed and was hospitalized. In April 1970 he was discharged from the service with a small pension.

He kept the truth about Molly Hazman from her son because he didn't want the boy to think that money had caused the loss of his mother (as money had caused the loss of his).

Owney's father was not the significant monument in Owney's life. Before and after she disappeared, his mother was to fill his mind and his life almost entirely.

TWO

In the late spring of 1988, Owney Hazman was working for his father-in-law's company. Heller's Wurst, Inc., which manufactured and sold frankfurters to people while they watched professionals exercise for them at ballparks and sports arenas. Owney's father-in-law was a native Puerto Rican, whose family, all *Wurstmeister*s, had originated in Saxony, Germany. He claimed that his family had invented the novelty frankfurter, which was required to be 24 inches long with a ring size of 24. However, an executive of the National Sausage Council, the industry's powerful trade association, had informed Owney that spectators had in fact eaten novelty frankfurters while they watched the Battle of Bull Run.

Owney's father-in-law held degrees from Stanford's Graduate School of Business, the Wharton School, and the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was the leader of the free world's frankfurter industry, a tremendous piece of clout given that fifty million frankfurters are eaten every day in the United States, an average of eighty hot dogs per person each year. ''And why not?'' as Owney's father-in-law had said again and again. ''They are convenient, available, easy to eat, inexpensive, consistent in quality and size, and easily seasoned to suit individual tastes.''

''Lissena me,'' Owney's father-in-law proselytized an average of nine

times a month before assemblies of women's clubs, sausage experts, and food buyers, "franks and sauerkraut were sold on milk rolls in the Bowery in New York as early as the late 1850s. Feltman opened his stand on Coney Island in 1871. Nathan Handwerker, who worked for Feltman, the founder of Nathan's Famous in 1916, now has fourteen restaurants featuring the frankfurter and seven franchise operations. And I know what I'm talking about—we got twenty-seven percent of the national market."

People around Owney's father-in-law showed respect for frankfurters. He made it clear that he would prefer it if no one referred to frankfurters as "hot dogs" in his presence, not because he considered the term vulgar, he said, but because the appellation had sprung from illiteracy. "In 1901," he had complained to Owney and many hundreds of others, "when Harry Stevens, the frankfurter vendor at the old Polo Grounds in New York, sought to add color and pageantry to his wares by yelling out their name as 'dachshund sausages,' Tad Dorgan, a newspaper man in the press box, didn't know how to spell *dachshund* so he called them 'hot dogs' and the damned name stuck." To Mr. Heller, when they were weiners they were called weiners, not frankfurters, and *Kalbsbratwursts* were called just that, in the Swiss tradition.

Although the company packed a few additives and preservatives into the product—dipotassium phosphate, sodium silico aluminate, tricalcium phosphate, monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrates, and a pinch or so of BHA antioxidant and disodium insonate (factors which Mr. Heller refered to only as *"Geschmackverstärker"*)—he also explained that they only put in a little to keep the product from turning gray and anyway it was entirely legal. "Every frankfurter this company produces spends three hours in the smoker and they all have natural casings; no packaging; they are shipped loose, in bulk, the quality way," Mr. Heller told anyone. "It is a product anyone could be proud of—competitively priced and intended to be served with semiadulterated mustard on a bun which has a shelf life of 180 days."

Owney's father-in-law, Francisco "Paco" Marx Heller, chairman and CEO of Heller's Wurst, Inc., also said, "Frankfurters, the soul of oral America, are running far ahead of the people, carrying the torch of hand-held fast food into the future. In this nation, which is in a greater hurry to get where they don't know where they are going than any other country in the world, the frankfurter has led the way—wrapped in bread, rolls, knish dough, bagel dough, tortillas or fried cornmeal—to almost totally hand-held food eaten around-the-clock in enormously imaginative short-cuts to nourishment: six-foot-long hero sandwiches; sausage souvlaki, a

Greek sandwich crowded into an Arab pita loaf with Greek salad; southern Italian sandwiches made of squares of rolled ricotta cheese, *salsiccie*, and sliced boiled spleen covered with grated Parmesan; fat bratwursts on exotically seeded rolls; a combination of pork cracklings, steamed plantains and roasted pork knuckles, all devoured while standing. Farfel sandwiches of chick-peas and spice sunk into Holy Land bread with salad topped by paprika. Hot spinach pies. Tacos and empanadas of cheese, chicken, and beef, and tostadas made of refried pinto beans and chili burgers and bean burritos. Counting the daily output of delicatessens—and mobile frankfurter vendors, which we cannot ignore—the city of New York alone consumes 27,852,651 sandwiches a week, almost a trillion and a half sandwiches a year, an eating style replicated throughout the country, all of it made possible by the father of all hand-held food: the frankfurter. Americans are too busy or too frightened by their politicians to sit down to eat. They believe in their hearts that money is something you have to make in case you don't die.''

Owney knew, somehow, despite his father-in-law's inspired beliefs, that his own destiny was not to be a frankfurter salesman. He didn't know what he was destined to be. He held a degree in economics from Eureka College, his dad's alma mater in Illinois. At ten, he had thought of being a fireman. That had gradually given way to perhaps becoming an arbitrageur. But after he was grown up, what he really wanted was to get a job as a national television network anchorman because of the exposure that would bring to him. Sooner or later, being full-frame on so many television screens throughout the country would make his mother understand that he was valuable enough, bright enough, successful enough, to make her want to come back to him.

He wasn't a snob; he wouldn't have been any more understanding of what had happened to him if he were selling caviar. He appreciated how it had happened that he was selling frankfurters, and in the largest sense he was grateful, but sometimes he wondered why he had accepted his father-in-law's offer when it had materialized. Except that he knew why. His entire happiness had emerged from Mr. Heller's offer—his wife and his family—at least eighty percent of his entire happiness because the other twenty percent was an elusive echo of times long past before he had turned nine years old; before his life had changed.

He had been raised to believe that his own father hadn't had an unusual career. Until Owney had been almost a fully grown man he had believed his father was a traveling accountant for the Defense Department. As a profession, accountancy had the dignity and self-expiation which selling

frankfurters lacked. Owney believed that passionately for his first few weeks with Heller's Wurst, Inc., but as time went on, as he realized how he was serving and how he had become an integral part of the American culture, he didn't believe that anymore. He had become a frankfurter man, heart and soul.

People liked Owney. Whatever it was he had, it sold frankfurters. He didn't think anyone could value their own luck as highly as he valued his, for having been blessed with the wife and children he had. But finding Dolly and his family had meant going into the frankfurter industry where he made more money than he had ever made anywhere else (in a haunted sense, in the sense of the whisper of the promise on which America had been built). Yet a conviction that selling frankfurters was not his destiny persisted.

He and Dolly had had three children so far. The oldest was only three years old and they had been married for less than four years. Dolly was now twenty-four years old. He was twenty-eight. That was the only thing that shook him about the marriage. They could end up having eighteen or twenty kids the way things were going. Looked at in an extreme way, having a lot of children was job insurance, he told himself. Every time they had another child he got a $50 raise. Ten children would mean an extra $500 a week; twenty children, $1,000. Grandchildren kept his mother-in-law happy. And when she was happy, his father-in-law wasn't unhappy.

Since he had been nine years old, Owney had had no reason to expect the joy his life had brought to him. It wasn't something to be reasoned, because Owney wasn't the sort of fellow who reasoned much. It was a miracle which Dolly had performed after what his mother had done to him. He had been all over that old ground with a psychoanalyst in Dixon, Illinois. On the twenty-seventh visit the doctor had explained, "This is an abnormally strong and prolonged attachment of the son to the mother. There is a clear-cut nostalgia for the mother which exceeds normality, with a certain amount of antagonism toward the father. We are going to probe for the parental image of the mother. This must be laid bare if the obsession is to be resolved."

The transient results of his psychoanalysis had convinced Owney that he shouldn't have used the money on treatment but should have conserved it in case he would need it to hire private detectives to look for his mother. The psychoanalyst had been someone to talk to about his perplexity, but the therapy hadn't helped him to understand what his mother had done or why she had done it.

He believed without any possibility of dissuasion that the nine years of his life before his mother had deserted him were the happiest of his life, although he couldn't remember them clearly. He could no longer remember what his long-missing mother had looked like, for example. He could remember her dark coloring and how she had laughed and the way she had taken him with her no matter where she went. She had had vivid Canadian speech (she said "ruff" for roof and "hoose" for house) and . . . but that was as far as he could go. He carried a laminated card in his wallet on which he had had his secretary, Miss McHanic, type words-to-live-by concerning his childhood:

We could never have loved the earth so well
if we had had no childhood in it. (George Eliot)
Only child life is real life. (George Orwell)
I love kids. (George Bush)

To outsiders, it could seem odd that he walked around with those quotes in his wallet and read them over not fewer than twice a day, and perhaps they would have judged Owney to be an obsessed man who thought of little else beyond finding his mother. He realized that he had met very few women (relatively), but still he thought his mother had been the most interesting woman he had ever known. She had been young and pretty and very smart, much smarter than his father, and the best company, perhaps, that he had ever known. Gypsy dark, perhaps quite tall, although he suspected that he remembered her that way always from the perspective of a small boy always looking up.

She had taken the family's photo album with her when she left. She had not only robbed him of herself but of the assurance of the memory of herself. He spent the greater part of his days searching his memory to remember exactly what she had looked like so that he could at least have that much, but the memory of her face, the way she had looked and had carried herself, had faded with each year, year after year, no matter how he struggled to keep her image clear and dear in his mind.

Because of the nature of his father's work, Owney and his mother had been alone together most of the time. His father would be somewhere out in the country, or the world, checking the books of defense contractors. In all those years he had never sent them a single postcard. Owney had always thought that he and his mother hadn't missed the man at all because he had his mother and she had him.

Owney had been an easygoing boy; a long, cheerful boy with sandy hair and a beautiful smile. Until he was nine and his mother had gone away, he had liked everyone. After that, in and out of depressions, he was wary and very careful about whom he liked or trusted. He was not easygoing anymore, or cheerful, but he still had a beautiful smile when he forgot about where his mother had gone.

In the few weeks each year that his father was able to spend with them at home, Owney would worry that he would stay on and take up even more of his mother's attention. The year after his mother had left them, his father became ill and was retired for physical disability and had to spend all of his time at home. By 1978, Owney was eighteen years old and about to start at Eureka, so *he* became the member of the family who wasn't home very much.

They lived in a two-story white clapboard house in Meier's Corners on Staten Island. Owney went back there every year after his father died, on the anniversary of the day his mother had gone away, to stand outside the house in silent prayer that she would come back to him. After he married Dolly she had made the pilgrimage with him and she never said she saw anything strange about it. It had been Dolly's idea to name their first daughter after his mother: Molly Tompkins Hazman, a name whose initials were, to Owney, an acronym for *myth*.

Dolly was in total agreement with him that they should hire private detectives to find his mother as soon as they had enough basic money put aside in Zero Coupon bonds to ensure college educations for their children.

On the day his mother had disappeared, Owney had come home from school to find the note, just a note, Scotch-taped to the refrigerator: *"Dear Owney,"* it said, *"You are practically grown up now. I have done all I can for you. Now my turn has come and I am going to find out whether there is any life left on the planet. There is hamburger in the fridge. Love, Mom."*

Owney waited two days for her to come back before he called the special number his father had left in case of an emergency. A man answered. Owney said, "I am Chandler Hazman's son, Owen. My father told us to call this number if we had to get in touch with him."

"Will you spell that name, please?"

Owney spelled it.

"What's the problem?"

"My mother isn't here."

"She isn't *there*?"

"No. Can you tell me where I can reach my father?"

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been alone?"

Owney shivered. "Two days." Logic told him he had been alone only two days but he knew he had been standing beside the kitchen table with her note in his hand for months, even years.

"How old are you?"

"Nine."

"How much money do you have?"

"About ninety-five cents."

"Okay. All right. We'll get word to your father. Anything goes wrong, you call this number. You understand?"

The voice disconnected. At nine o'clock that night a messenger delivered an envelope which Owney signed for. There was five hundred dollars in twenty dollar bills in the envelope. When his father came home three and a half weeks later, Owney still had almost four hundred and ten dollars left.

He didn't hear anything from his mother. He went to school. He did the housework and the shopping. Everything was just as neat as his mother had always liked it because at every moment he expected to hear her key in the lock. When he came home from school in the afternoon, the first thing he shouted (the only thing he ever said in the house for days on end) was "Mom? Are you home?"

After he called the special number, he waited for his father to return. When he did come back, and it was pretty quick Owney thought, considering that he had been working in Asia, he stared at the note from his wife which Owney handed him and began to cry. He *cried*. Like some dumb kid. "Didn't she even *call* to see how you were?" he asked Owney.

"Well," Owney said, "you never call either."

Owney was graduated from high school eight and a half years after his mother left them. Then, out of the blue, his father somehow managed to have him accepted at Eureka College. He lived on campus for four years, coming home at Christmas breaks and all through the summers when, sometimes, his father was there to keep him company. Ten years later he was still trying to understand his mother's note. He had decoded it, more or less, but he couldn't understand what it meant or why she had left him. She loved him. He was sure of that and yet she had left him forever.